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ABSTRACT

The lack of representation of minority group members in social work education and the profession has been a salient issue in recent years. A project designed to alleviate this lack and to develop social work curriculum relevant to the minority community and minority group experiences stemmed from the creation of a Consortium of Texas schools of social work. This paper, one of a series of presentations made at social work curriculum workshops at each consortium school, highlights problems and issues involved in infusing minority content into tne curriculum. The author discusses the need for curriculum change and suggests new directions for core content to be included in social work curriculum. A related document is SO 005 801. (Author/SHM)

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AN OCCASIONAL PAPER

OF THE

CONSORTIUM OF TEXAS SCHOOLS OF SOCIAL WORK

SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION FOR ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED GROUPS IN TEXAS

EXPLORATIONS INTO VARIATIONS ON A THEME

by

Lennie-Marie P. Tolliver

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Prepared for presentation at

"Core Curricular Dimensions" Workshop

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Supported by National Institute of Mental Health Grant #12439-02

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PREFACE

The lack of representation of minority group members in social work education and the profession has been a salient issue in recent years. In an attempt to deal significantly with this question a meeting was held in December 1968, in Austin, Texas chaired by Dr. Milton Wittman, Chief of the Social Work Training Branch of the National Institute of Mental Health. Sponsored by the School of Social Work at The University of Texas at Austin and the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, this meeting was the primary impetus behind the creation of a Consortium of the Texas schools of social work and the project which they designed, "Social Work Education for Economically Disadvantaged Groups in Texas."

The projects main focus has been the recruitment and retention of economically disadvantaged students, including minority groups; the development of a statewide recruitment structure that will insure the participation of minority group members in social work education beyond the life of the project; and the development of social work curriculum relevant to the minority community and minority group experiences.

In order to achieve the third goal of this project, a series of workshops on "Minority Group Content and the Enrichment of Social Work Curriculum" were held in the four graduate schools of social work in Texas. These workshops highlighted many critical problems and issues involved in infusing ethnic minority content into the curriculum of schools of social work. The articles in this series were presented at the workshops which were held in each consortium school.

Thanks are due to the deans, coordinators, and curriculum committees who assisted in organizing the workshops. Acknowledgement is made to the National Institute of Mental Health whose grant is supporting the Consortium Project. Special appreciation is also expressed to the Advisory Board of the Consortium Project whose suggestion and support helped in the planning and development of the series of workshops.

August 1972

Juan Armendáriz
Project Director
School of Social Work
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at Austin

EXPLORATIONS INTO VARIATIONS ON A THEME: Minorities and the Core Dimensions of Practicum Instruction in Social Work Education

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Until recently, American thought was dominated by the "melting pot" concept. There was an expectation that the diverse groups in our country would submerge our identifying characteristics and with the passage of time take on a new set of "American" qualities. As we approach the 21st century, it is becoming evident that the goal of establishing an integrated society is being questioned, with some leaders advocating separatism while others advocate a pluralistic society. At this point in time, however, each of the so-called minority groups is in a stage of separatism. It seems to me, however, that these stages represent a point in time during a transition period, and if each of the groups successfully achieves a sense of its own identity and worth and equal access to opportunity, the American model will be a pluralistic or an individualistic model. For despite the divergence in thought, many Americans are beginning to recognize and to accept the fact that beneath all differences there is a COMMON HUMANITY -- a humanity which stresses the basic worth and dignity of each individual and that somehow society must accomodate itself to that fact.

Like other segments in our society, the segments of the profession of social work, its providors, its consumers, its students, and its faculty, are engaged in self-examination, in varying degrees, with regard to the basic questions of which way to go and how do we get there? In considering the contributions that one area of social

work education might make in response to these questions, it would seem initially that major reform, realignment, or restructuring of the core curriculum of field instruction is required in order to accomodate to the expressed needs of minorities and to some of the new and emerging content about minorities. Deep reflection, admittedly colored by personal life experiences, has led me to the conclusion that although there is merit in those ideas, without concomittant change in another direction, sustained resolution of the problems encountered by minorities will not take place.

Change, it seems to me, is needed at the beginning or in the foundation level of curriculum, in the formulation of and commitment to basic educational and service objectives. If appropriate changes in primary objectives occur and their re-formulation results in appropriate, related changes in the curriculum, there will be a modification of content and educational processes. In large measure, however, the modification would be in the degree of or extent of focus and emphasis ascribed to certain content and processes, for my premise is that social work needs to RE-DEDICATE itself to the basic values of social work as embodied in the "CODE OF ETHICS" and TO CLOSE THE GAP BETWEEN these EXPRESSED VALUES and our BEHAVIOR.

The practicum, historically the step-child of the scholarly phases of the educational process but often the initiator or the purveyor of innovative educational experiences, has a unique opportunity and responsibility to assume a leadership role in this change. The potential for assuming this role stems from the fact that the practicum area has ascribed to it an especial responsibility for insuring the development of and for maintaining the balance between the cognitive and affective dimensions of learning and of service.

Its focus is on the end product, the translation of objectives into behavior. It is this behavior, a balance between knowing, thinking, feeling and doing in relation to the psycho-social problems of individuals, families, groups, and communities, filtered through the value screen of social work, that embodies the needed changes in the core curriculum of practicum instruction.

In our efforts to professionalize, codify, and conceptualize social work practice, to maximize the scientific base of social work, theoreticians and educators have focused prime attention on the knowledge base and the cognitive aspects of social work practice. Yet, it is generally accepted that it is the ability or inability of a student to apply this knowledge in real life situations which determines whether the educational outcome is successful or unsuccessful. It would seem, therefore, that in order for the behavioral outcome in relation to minorities to be one that insures their opportunities for self-actualization and self-realization, the art of social work or the educational objectives which fall in the affective domain--the feelings, the emotions, the appreciation of others, the commitment to serving, need in these changing and critical times to become a source of focus and emphasis.

A review of the literature and the research of both social work and education reveals that this is a process in which we are engaged. In the decade of the 70s, a prime educational objective must be to change attitudes as they relate to critical, perhaps survival social problems. Yet this change must occur within the changing times in which we live and the society or culture which surrounds us.

Redesigning books, inserting new content, establishing new concentrations, integrating faculty and student bodies, moving out to serve the disadvantaged, the minorities of a community are all

efforts which will have some effect on attitudes. But these actions do not represent the full means by which the expression of values, attitudes may be changed. We need to marshall all of our resources and to endeavor consciously to discover new resources. Just as a range of options exists in terms of educational objectives, a range of options exists in terms of content, teaching methodology, etc. As content related to minorities--their dialect, communication patterns, value systems, life styles, and family culture emerges, it can be incorporated into the curriculum but this technical equipment does not insure success in preparing culturally different and disadvantaged students for social work practice nor does it enable graduating practitioners to practice effectively with the different and disadvantaged. It is the nature and quality of the relationship or of the opportunity that is afforded which is still one of the critical, little understood determinants of a successful outcome. Thus, disciplined sensitivity to the need for human fulfillment and emotional commitment to enhancing the opportunity for human fulfillment, as demonstrated in behavior are requisites to success beyond technical competence and to me embody the core dimensions of the practicum.

Obviously there is a need for the explicit setting of goals and for the explicit development of the means and ways to achieve these goals and to measure them. Although each faculty must determine these goals in relation to its own situation, some of the ideas which follow may be of help in the search to enhance understanding and the quality of life for those about whom social work is concerned.

In our quest to bring about change in the learner, we begin with the question of change from what to what. As we add new

content and move in new directions, we need to examine what we have that is useful and relevant and has stood the test of time, using our philosophy screen, the basic tenets of social work and the philosophy about how students learn best to sift and sort for relevance and priorities.[1] In reviewing some of the social work literature, it was apparent that much attention is being given to objectives and content related to societal or institutional or agency change. I do not question this validity but if it means to the exclusion of individuals and families, then I cannot agree for it seems to me that change needs to occur in all areas in order for maximum opportunity for self-realization and self-actualization to occur.

Social work has come full circle in that we have recognized that our capacity to help some individuals and families is hampered by institutional and/or societal forces and that we have an obligation to make these forces more responsive to human need. But we should not fall in the same trap that we did before when we began to focus on the individual, the trap of "throwing out the baby with the water". Now that we have returned to our concern with the environment--the community, the laws, etc., the external forces that impinge upon our clients, we must recognize and accept the fact that always there will be individuals and families with psychosocial problems of one kind or another and that some of these persons will need help from others in coping effectively with these problems. Social work, therefore, must be able to accomodate within both dimensions of service.

Before proceeding with a consideration of minorities and the core curriculum of social work, let us pause a minute and consider, whom does each of us mean when we refer to minorities? For our

purposes, we have identified Blacks, Chicanos, Indians, and the disadvantaged. But what of the aged, of women, perhaps of migrant workers or itinerant farmers? Exclusion variables such as race, language, and culture operating in a manner which creates social distance between individuals possessing those characteristics and those who do not, used to be the major determinants of minority status. In recent years, however, sociologists have re-defined or broadened the concept of a minority to include the group that is the object of systematic discrimination; the group that is without power; the group that is forced by external forces toward self-consciousness and cohesiveness. A look at the social scene of today indicates that there are a number of groups of people who consider themselves as minorities if the latter criteria are applied. It would seem to me, therefore, that it would behoove us to consider our topic not only in the light of the minorities about whom we have especial concern today but in terms of minorities in general, for a new group may emerge tomorrow and we should not have to engage in this type of in-depth examination each time a new group emerges but be able to identify what is new and different and needs to be incorporated for use. Our success would depend, in large measure, on our ability to identify and/or to formulate enduring concepts and principles related to understanding and working with minorities.

Given this particular geographical area with its southern and western cultural dimensions and the objectives of educating Anglos, Blacks, Chicanos, and native Americans to serve minorities, it would seem to me that one of the core concepts could be that each minority group differs, one from the other but that each has threads in common with the others. These common, as well as different threads must be identified and incorporated for use. It would seem

to me that the most efficient and effective way to accomplish this end would be through both individual study of the groups about whom there is concern and comparative study of the groups in order to identify and highlight the similarities and the differences.

On the assumption that the practicum cuts across the curriculum offerings of the school, and, that pedagogically it is less well developed and conceptualized than other aspects of the curriculum, I prefer to consider the practicum curriculum in terms of its core dimensions. The core dimensions are viewed as the distinctive attributes or properties which affect the educational outcome of the practicum courses. Unlike the courses on campus or simulated practice experiences, we, as educators, have minimal control over some of the distinctive attributes or properties of the practicum. Our control is based on powers of persuasion, presumed expertise, ascribed leadership roles, negotiating capacities, and input from the students being educated and the clients being served.

Using the Tylerian framework for curriculum construction as a frame of reference for identifying the core dimensions, let me raise a series of questions.[2] In the area of primary objectives, what are the societal objectives in relation to minorities? What are the objectives of the students? What are the objectives of the educators, the subject-matter specialists? What are your thoughts about whether our society should be a separatistic, integrated, pluralistic or individualistic society? Within this context, what do you mean by self-actualization and self-realization? Do you have a concept of Americanization? How are you coping or will you cope with the fact that as a subject-matter specialist, a person occupying a position of authority based on knowledge, that movement into

this curriculum content area places you in a position of not knowing the answers? Just as the educational experience places an intellectual and emotional demand on students, it places one on teachers also. Thus values made conscious and expressed in objectives become a necessary core dimension. Values are a major element in forming the base for action.

To help reduce the gaps in knowledge and the affect tied to the situation, certain sources of input such as the minority students enrolled in the program, the minority caucuses and emerging group associations located on campus and within the community, literature from fields other than social work, and individuals in the community with presumed knowledge and experience, who may or may not possess formalized academic training, need to be sought out and used. Their communication, however, must be subjected to the same rigorous study that our customary sources of input have been subjected to, for simply because a minority person says, "It is so" does not make it so. As educators we bear the responsibility for making an effort to determine its validity and reliability. We must be ever mindful of the fact that the content specifically related to minorities is in an emerging state and what may be true today may not be true tomorrow. One well-known example is the myth of the matriarchal structure of the Black family which was accepted until recently by Blacks and non-Blacks. Current research, in which the "right" questions are being asked by the "right" people, or at least with their help is yielding a different view of the strengths, weaknesses, structure, etc. of the Black family.

Some of the emerging content about minorities, especially as noted in the education literature suggests that communication skills--

verbalizations, conceptual ability, expertise with the written word, need to be taken into account not only in service contacts with minorities but with minority students as we put into practice our theory about how students learn best. Just as we say to clients, "I do not understand but I want to know and to understand in order to be helpful," it seems to me that we can say this to students. There is no student who has experienced in his life situation each and every problem encountered by each and every client with whom he has had contact. It is difficult for me to accept the concept, therefore, that only a minority person can work effectively with the members of his own group. I believe the concept of individualizing student learning in the field still holds true, and, that it is a practical and achievable objective.

During the first year of your program, in keeping with the over-all objectives of the School, the practicum focuses on developing in students skill in working with individuals and groups, and at the neighborhood or community level. In selecting the agency settings to be utilized and the learning opportunities to be made available to each student, certain curriculum decisions must be made. For example, one crucial decision relates to the appropriateness of a setting based on the population it serves or is willing to serve. If in the judgment of the School, a particular agency should be serving a particular minority group but it is not, will the setting be used? If the setting is used, will an effort be made to change it from within? If it is not used, will the appropriate agency personnel be given the real reasons and/or will the School participate in efforts to bring about appropriate change? What part, if any, will students be permitted to play? What information, if any, will be shared with them about a particular setting?

Another crucial or pivotal decision relates to whether the objective of potential affective change in the learner can occur through students sharing with each other from their experience in formalized group conferences and informal peer group interchange or whether each student needs an opportunity to engage in a direct service experience with one or more individuals, families, and/or groups. Although it has been my personal belief for years that the practicum instructor has a responsibility to help students stretch their relationship capacity to the extent that they can work in a meaningful way with a wide variety of people, I recognize that many of my colleagues do not place the same degree of emphasis on this ability. If, however, effective engagement with a member or members of a minority group becomes a prime objective, what standard(s) must be set by which to measure the achievement of the objective?

It is true that initial identification with a person because of observable characteristics facilitates the establishment of a beginning relationship but my own personal experiences lead me to conclude that a truly accepting, sensitive, warm, giving, and concerned person <u>over time</u> can reach the same point. When this is not possible, there is a problem to be worked--the feelings surrounding the situation. In essence, diagnosis or assesment becomes the expected activity. When time is of the essence, service objectives must determine the next steps and who will take them.

Just as we use consultation as an aid in viewing objectively a problematic situation or as a means of adding to our knowledge and skill so that we may deal more effectively with it, we should feel free to engage the services of a member of a minority group when "minorityness" appears to be a part of the problem. Just as

the majority group uses distinguishing characteristics negatively with a minority person, a minority individual or group may use these same characteristics in an adaptive way for survival purposes or in a maladaptive and defensive manner. Anyone who has engaged in teaching a number of minority students probably has encountered the student who "wears his minority role and status on his sleeve" or one who falls back on this when he gets in trouble. Several students of this type with whom I am familiar used their race or culture (in the instance of a foreign student) as a rationale for having the rules bent or the standards lowered when they encountered difficulty. When faced with reailty, not only a holding to the expectations but a concomittant expression of confidence that they could meet the expectations, and when appropriate the provision of help such as teaching the use of a dictionary, the offensive-defensive stance gave way.

I recall also one practice situation in which the mother of an adolescent was happy initially over the changes occurring in the youngster's behavior. When the nature of their relationship began to change, she became ambivalent about his remaining in treatment. The day that she saw her son was being seen by a Black social worker was their last day at the clinic. She used blackness as her reason for withdrawing but clinic personnel, including the worker believed it was related to the rapid changes in her son and that race was just a convenient handle to mask her anxiety and anger.

Until one has had an opportunity to accumulate experience in work with minorities, it may be difficult to assess objectively and validly certain responses or lack of response. It is at these points that a minority consultant can be extremely helpful.

As a member of a minority group, I can assure you, however, that almost without exception, a minority person who has experienced being a member of a minority group has "built in antennae" which enable him to recognize the insincere, the subtle prejudices, the ungiving, etc. The more awareness one has of one's own feelings, attitudes, and values, the greater the chance that one can constructively use a minority consultant.

At the same time that the minority student must be assessed in terms of what he brings to the educational-service experience--the intellectual and emotional demands that will be made on him, the nature and extent of his engagement in the experience and his use of it, the student from the majority culture must be assessed in the same manner. Lack of knowledge and direct experience, stereotyped thinking, misinformation, belief in myths, etc. are potentially normal, reasonable, and usual positions for the latter students to be in. Their educability should be determined by their responsiveness to new knowledge, to new experience, to the help that is offered them in developing self-awareness, self-discipline and a sufficient relationship capacity to engage in serving a variety of clients. Materials related to teaching methodology with students based on identified learning blocks,[3] experiences of foreign students enrolled in schools of social work in the United States,[4] and culture and values[5] can aid in formulating educational diagnoses and educational goals and methodology.

As I reviewed the School's material, I wondered about the efficacy of maintaining a colloquium on philosophy, ethics and values

as an end of the program experience. The question which came to mind was whether the students, both majority and minority, needed this content and experience as a foundation to aid them as they progressed through the educational program? It is recognized, however, that it is possible that the infusion of this content into all areas of the core curriculum may be sufficient but it would seem that this would hold true only if the content is elucidated sufficiently for the students to readily and easily identify it.

If the emerging content about minorities has validity, do the second year objectives as subsumed under the concentrations of inter-personal and organizing and planning remain sufficient and valid, or, does consideration have to be given to other concentration options or to a sub-concentration? As the School moves toward increasing its enrollment of minority students and toward an education-service curriculum that is more responsive to the needs of minorities, it will experience as have other schools of social work, the use of minority students by faculty, other students, and agency personnel as "experts" on minorities and their needs, wishes, problems, life styles, etc. What values, attitudes, knowledge and skills does the minority student need in order to appropriately discharge this ascribed role? What are the intellectual and affective demands made on him in his dual role as student and teacher? As one who will function automatically and naturally, if he accepts this responsibility, as a knowledge-builder during his school years and as a potential knowledge-builder following graduation, the existence of a third option focused on staff development, teaching, and/or consultation would provide the student with the theoretical base needed to engage effectively in this type of practice and in

the long run could contribute to the knowledge base of social work practice. Other practice options might be a focus on services to minorities and the disadvantaged. It is recognized that the options must be determined not only by desired objectives but by reality factors such as resources.

More specifically, what is the potential core content for inclusion in the practicum? What should be taught about minorities, how, and when? The five major content areas which appeared in the literature of the various fields, which seemed to withstand examination, and which will probably withstand the test of time are those related to culture, values, identity, attitudes, and hope. Some of the content will be new for some, some will be new for all, for some it will be a matter of different degrees of focus and emphasis.

The new content, it seems to me, will be related primarily to culture and values. In working with native Americans, for example, one must be aware of and take into account differences in their concepts of time and their responsibility for extended family members. Yet no minority group or individual can be separated completely from the broader culture. Whether it is a pluralistic society or an individualistic or an integrated one, as long as one is in it, one is still a part of it, is affected by it, and somehow must learn to deal with it. Cross-cultural studies, in terms of both content and the methodology of study, would seem to offer a wealth of materials to aid in curriculum building. Students will need to learn how to study minorities and how to put this content with other content, in such a manner that it is available for use.

The content related to identity, attitudes, and hope, from my perspective, is primarily content known to us, as educators. What

is needed, however, is the appropriate application of this content to minorities. In some ways, the content is given a different focus or emphasis when it is used in an individualized assessment that specifically takes into account the realistic socio-cultural situation. Hope is an important element in determining the outcome of service. What is the implication of the presence or absence of hope in a basically racist society? What is the possible range and depth of interventive strategies? How much commitment to provide the maximum service possible does the practitioner need in order to serve adequately? Similar points can be made in reference to attitudes and identity. We know a great deal about them but now we must reconsider this knowledge in the light of knowledge that is being gained about the culture and values of minorities within the broader culture.

As for the questions, should the content be infused throughout the curriculum or taught as separate entities and at what points in time should the content be introduced. There are arguments on both sides. It would seem to me that presenting the content singularly and in contrast forms with other related content takes advantage of the strengths in both forms of presentation. If attitude and value change becomes one of the key objectives, then the earlier the material is presented, the more likely one will enhance the opportunity for it to influence the affective functioning of students.

All core dimensions of the practicum are related and interact with and impinge upon other dimensions. Each dimension needs to be subjected to rigorous examination in the light of formulated educational objectives and the theory about how students learn best. There are other significant dimensions which we have not examined

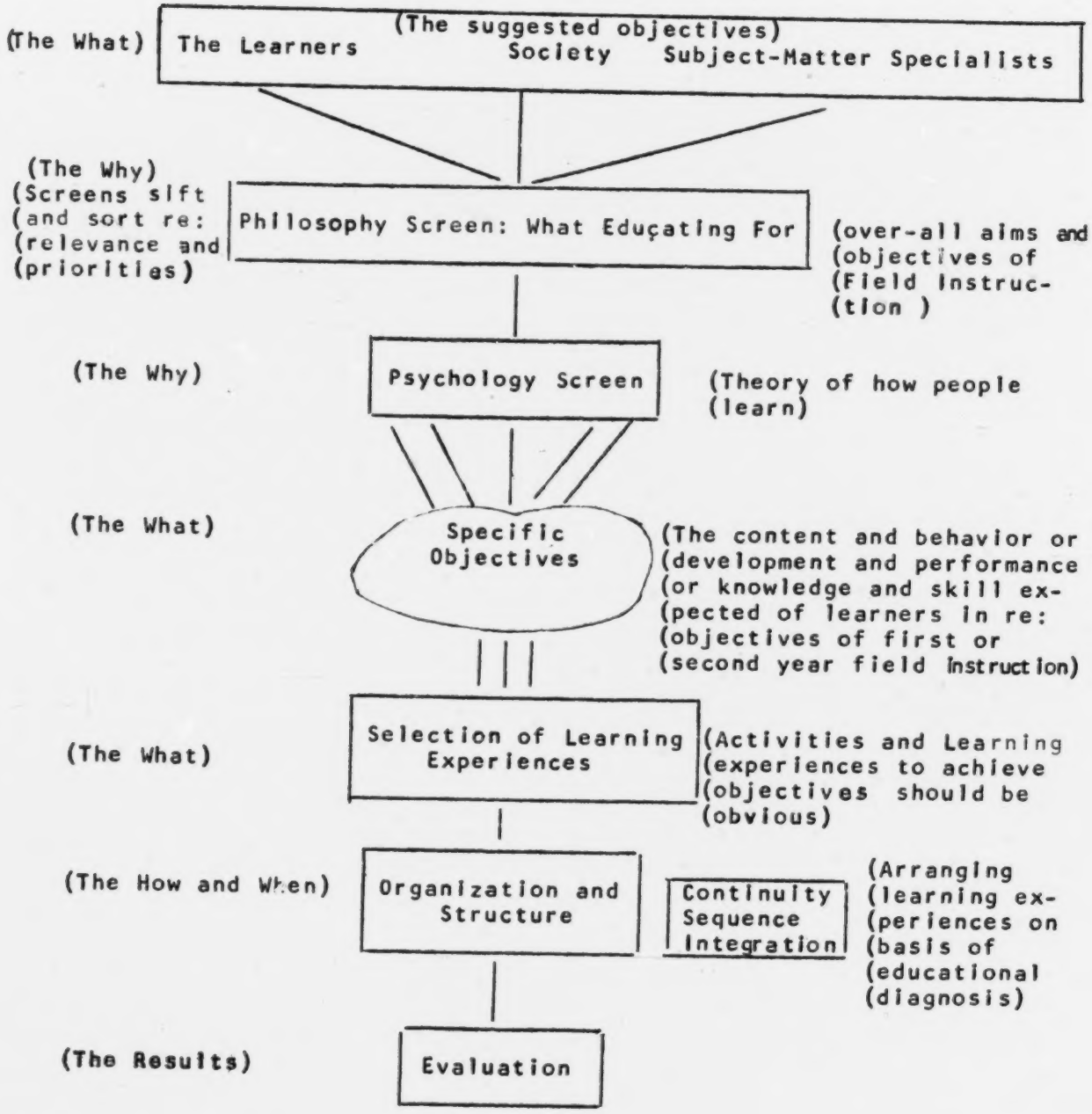
such as the size and composition of the student unit. It is hoped, however, that this presentation suggests a framework for this type of in-depth examination. In a way, we have considered our topic in terms of the old adage or precept--diagnosis or assessment defines the prognosis and prescribes the treatment or action. A theorem from even earlier days is that there is nothing really new, only different arrangements or ordering of inputs.

In closing, I'd like to remind you of a scene from ALICE IN WONDERLAND, when she asked the cat, "Which way shall I walk, which way shall I go?" The cat replied, "That depends a good deal on where you want to go." VALUES ARE A BASE FOR ACTION. We are on the brink of engaging in mind-stretching experiences, soul-searching reactions, and life enactment of dreams. As a professional school, a school of social work has a responsibility to participate in teaching and research, to give high quality community service, and to provide progressive social leadership. The curriculum is a complex set of assumptions about that which is considered most important to learn and how it is to be taught. Depending on its conceptualization, it can enhance or impede learning, and, thus in our field service. It needs a unifying thread--the basic values to which social work ascribes. Thus, I say, Explorations into Variations on a theme. We need to commit ourselves anew so that today's dreams become tomorrow's realities.

Norman Cousins in an editorial in the December 26, 1970, issue of SATURDAY REVIEW in making a case for Hope expressed my views so aptly. He said, "The capacity for hope is the greatest fact in life. Hope is the beginning of plans, It gives men a destination, a sense of direction for getting there, and the energy to get started. It

enlarges sensitivities. It gives proper values to feelings as well as to facts... What is needed is a rekindling of the human imagination about life as man might like it, about the full uses of his intelligence to bring sanity and sensitivity to his world and to his art, about the importance of the individual, about his capacity for creating new institutions, discovering new approaches, sensing new possibilities... Men can be encouraged to rediscover themselves... Men can be capable of indignation about the things they can be indignant about; they can be audible about the things they should be talking about; and they can shape their society in a way that does justice to their hopes." This is the essence of my presentation.

Curriculum construction as outlined by Ralph Tyler, charted by Rachel Marks*, with parenthetical statements by Lennie Tolliver



(Process begins again making changes based on results)

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FOOTNOTES

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2. Refer to attached Curriculum Construction Chart

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